



# Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report

January 2000, NCJ 178888

## Veterans in Prison or Jail

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In 1998 there were an estimated 25,062,400 veterans in the United States population, including 225,700 veterans held in the Nation's prisons and jails. Males comprised 95% of all veterans and 99% of those veterans in prison and jail. Among adult males in 1998, there were 937 incarcerated veterans per 100,000 veteran residents, up from 571 per 100,000 in 1985. Despite the increase, male veterans were incarcerated at less than half the rate of adult male nonveterans (1,971 per 100,000) in 1998.

Since 1985 the number of U.S. veterans has declined by nearly 3 million, an average decline of 1% per year. The number of male veterans dropped from 26,962,000 in 1985 to 23,834,100 in 1998, while the number of female veterans rose from 1,044,700 to 1,228,300. The number in prison or jail rose from 154,600 in 1985 to 225,700 in 1998, an increase of 46%. However, during this period the number of nonveteran inmates rose 172%. Veterans accounted for 12% of all inmates in 1998, down from 21% in 1985.

These data are based on interviews with national samples of inmates. In responses to the 1997 Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities and the 1996 Survey of Inmates in Local Jails, inmates provided information on their military service, as well as their criminal history and personal background.

### Highlights

#### Over 225,000 veterans held in Nation's prisons or jails in 1998

	Estimated number of veteran inmates	
	1985	1998
Prison	100,200	156,400
Local jail	54,400	69,300

  

	Percent of inmates reporting military service	
	1986	1997
Prison	24.9%	14.5%
Federal	20.2	12.5
State		
Local jail	21.2%	11.7%

- 1 in every 6 incarcerated veterans were not honorably discharged from the military.

- About 20% of veterans in prison or jail reported seeing combat duty during their military service.

- In 1998, an estimated 56,500 Vietnam War-era veterans and 18,500 Persian Gulf War-era veterans were held in State and Federal prisons.

#### Veterans more likely than others to be in prison for a violent offense but less likely to be serving a sentence for drugs

Offense	State prisoners, 1997	
	Veterans	Nonveterans
Violent	55.1%	46.1%
Property	20.3	22.2
Drug	14.4	21.5
Public-order	10.2	9.8

  

Average maximum sentence		
Violent	264 mo	214 mo
Property	123	116
Drug	118	107
Public-order	86	79

- About 35% of veterans in State prison, compared to 20% of non-veterans, were convicted of homicide or sexual assault.

- Veterans (30%) were more likely than other State prisoners (23%) to be first-time offenders.

- Among violent State prisoners, the average sentence of veterans was 50 months longer than the average of nonveterans.

#### Veterans in State prison reported higher levels of alcohol abuse, lower levels of drug abuse, than other prisoners

	State prisoners, 1997	
	Veterans	Nonveterans
Drug use in month before offense	45.4%	58.1%
Alcohol dependent	30.6%	23.6%
Identified as mentally ill	19.3%	15.8%
Homeless at some time in 12 months before arrest	12.4%	10.3%

- Veterans in State prison (26%) were less likely than other State prisoners (34%) to report having used drugs at the time of their offense.

- Nearly 60% of veterans in State prison had driven drunk in the past, compared to 45% of other inmates.

- About 70% of veterans, compared to 54% of other State prisoners, had been working full-time before arrest.

## Veterans include all persons with prior military service

In this BJS Special Report, the term "veteran" is defined as any person who has reported prior service in the United States Armed Forces, regardless of their type of military discharge. This definition differs from that used by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to determine eligibility for various veteran benefit programs, as it includes persons not honorably discharged and a small number of persons awaiting discharge. However, VA counts of veterans in the U.S. resident population and BJS counts of those in prison or jail employ comparable definitions that include all types of discharges.

The percentage of veterans in the U.S. population who had not been honorably discharged is unknown. Data from the Defense Manpower Data Center indicate that 9.5% of the 217,600 officers and enlisted persons discharged from the U.S. Armed Forces during fiscal year 1999 were not honorably discharged (including dishonorable, bad conduct, other than honorable, and general discharges).

Not honorably discharged veterans are found in incarcerated populations in higher proportions — 17% of veterans held in State prison, 15% of those in Federal prison, and 14% of those in local jails. Veterans in prison who had not been honorably discharged from military service have more serious criminal and substance abuse histories than other incarcerated veterans. (For a detailed comparison of incarcerated veterans by discharge type, see page 13.)

Type of discharge	Percent of veterans in local jails, 1996	Percent of veterans in prison, 1997	
		State	Federal
Honorable <sup>a</sup>	83.0%	76.0%	80.7%
Not honorable <sup>b</sup>	13.8	17.4	14.9
Medical <sup>c</sup>	3.2	5.4	3.3
Not discharged	0	1.3	1.2

<sup>a</sup>Includes general discharges that have been converted to honorable status since leaving military service.

<sup>b</sup>Includes other general, dishonorable, undesirable, and bad conduct discharges.

<sup>c</sup>Includes Section 8 discharges.

## Number of U.S. veterans declining; number held in prison and jail rising

In 1998 the veteran population in the United States totaled 25 million, but the number has been steadily declining. The Department of Veterans Affairs, using data from the decennial census, annual discharge data, and mortality rates, reports that the number of male veterans has dropped by more than 3 million since 1985. Veterans accounted for 1 in 3 adult male residents in 1985 but declined to 1 in 4 by 1998. During the same period, the number of female veterans has risen by over 180,000. Overall, the number of veterans has declined nearly 1% per year since 1985.

In BJS surveys of jail and prison inmates conducted since the mid-1980's, a declining percentage reported prior military service. Veterans accounted for 13% of State prisoners in 1997 and 12% of jail inmates in 1996, down from 20% in 1986 and 21% in 1983, respectively. While these percentages declined, the overall size of the prison and jail populations rose sharply. Between 1985 and 1998, the number of prison and jail inmates grew by over 1 million. As a result, the number of incarcerated veterans also rose, from 154,600 in 1985 to 225,700 in 1998.

Among adult males — who comprise 95% of all veterans — the incarceration rate of veterans has remained far lower than that of nonveterans. In 1985 there were 571 incarcerated male veterans per 100,000 male veteran residents, compared to a rate of 965 per 100,000 among male nonveterans. In 1998 the rate of male veterans had increased to 937 but was still less than half that of nonveterans (1,971).

### Number of veterans in U.S. resident population

Year	Total	Male	Female
1985	28,007,000	26,962,000	1,045,000
1990	27,183,700	26,089,700	1,094,000
1995	26,061,800	24,864,000	1,197,800
1998	25,062,400	23,834,100	1,228,300
Percent change, 1985-98	-10.5%	-11.6%	17.5%
Annual average change, 1985-98	-0.9%	-0.9%	1.3%

Source: Unpublished data from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Program and Data Analysis.

### Percent of inmates reporting military service in BJS surveys

	1986	1991	1997
Prison	20.2	16.4	12.5
Federal	21.2%	15.5%	11.7%
State	21.2%	15.5%	11.7%
Local jail	21.2%	15.5%	11.7%

### Estimated number of veteran inmates

Year	Prison	Jail	Total
1985	100,200	54,400	154,600
1990	124,200	62,800	187,000
1995	136,600	59,300	195,900
1998	156,400	69,300	225,700

### Prison and jail inmates per 100,000 adult U.S. residents

	1985		1998	
	Veteran	Nonveteran	Veteran	Nonveteran
Male	571	965	937	1,971
Female	57	45	187	138

## Nearly 60% of incarcerated veterans had served in the Army

Veterans in prison and jail had served in all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, including the U.S. Coast Guard and National Guard (table 1). Although the U.S. Army has accounted for less than 40% of U.S. military personnel since 1971, Army veterans made up a majority of veterans incarcerated in both State (59%) and Federal (58%) prison, as well as local jails (57%). The Air Force accounted for an average of 29% of U.S. military personnel between 1960 and 1996, but Air Force veterans made up 9% of veterans in State prison, 12% of those in Federal prison, and 10% of veterans in local jails. (For details on military personnel data see *Methodology*.)

Veterans' mean length of military service was about the same among jail inmates (44 months) and State (45 months) and Federal (48 months) prisoners. Veterans held in Federal prison were the least likely to report less than a year of military service (10%), followed by veterans in local jails (14%) and State prison (15%).

## 1 in 5 incarcerated veterans saw combat duty during their service

About equal percentages of veterans in State and Federal prisons (20% of each) and local jails (21%) reported seeing combat duty during their military service. A larger percentage of the veterans in prison (50% of State and 61% of Federal) had served during a period of wartime.

**Table 1. Military service of veterans in State and Federal prisons, 1997, and local jails, 1996**

	Percent of veterans in prison, 1997		Percent of veterans in local jails, 1996
	State	Federal	
<b>In which branch of the U.S. Armed Forces did you serve?<sup>a</sup></b>			
Army	58.6%	58.4%	56.7%
Navy	17.2	14.0	19.8
Marine Corps	15.6	16.2	14.8
Air Force	8.9	11.9	10.1
Coast Guard	0.9	0.5	0.3
Other <sup>b</sup>	1.3	1.2	1.0
<b>During your service, did you see combat in a combat or line unit?</b>			
Yes	20.1%	20.2%	21.0%
No	79.9	79.8	79.0
<b>Length of military service</b>			
12 months or less	14.6%	10.3%	13.6%
13-24 months	19.2	19.5	18.9
25-36 months	25.0	25.7	24.7
37-60 months	21.1	24.4	21.9
61 months or longer	20.0	20.0	21.0
Mean length of service	45 mos.	48 mos.	44 mos.
Estimated number of veterans	134,400	14,800	59,700

Note: Veterans made up 12.5% of the State, and 14.5% of the Federal prison population at the time of the survey in 1997, and 11.7% of the local jail population at the time of the survey in 1996.

<sup>a</sup>Detail adds to more than 100% because veterans may have served in more than one branch of the U.S. Armed Forces.

<sup>b</sup>Includes National Guard or Reserve service in an unspecified branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, as well as service in the Merchant Marine.

The reported wartime experience of incarcerated veterans changed after 1991, reflecting the end of the Persian Gulf War and the effects of aging among veterans from previous wars and military conflicts. In 1997 Vietnam-era veterans were still the most common wartime veterans, accounting for 35% of veterans in State prison and

43% of those in Federal prison. This represented a decline from 1991, when Vietnam-era veterans made up 42% and 49% of State and Federal prison veterans, respectively.

In 1997 Persian Gulf War-era veterans made up 12% of State and 13% of Federal prison veterans. Veterans who served during the Korean Conflict era accounted for 3% of State and 5% of Federal prison veterans, down from 6% and 9%, respectively in 1991. One percent of both State and Federal prison veterans reported military service during World War II.

	Percent of veterans in prison			
	State		Federal	
	1997	1991	1997	1991
Time of military service*				
Peacetime	50.3%	50.9%	39.0%	37.1%
Wartime	49.7	49.1	61.0	62.9
World War II era (1941-45)	1.3	1.4	1.2	4.5
Korean Conflict era (1950-53)	2.9	5.7	4.6	8.8
Vietnam War era (1964-1973)	35.3	42.1	43.3	49.0
Persian Gulf War era (1990-1991)	11.7	1.3	12.9	1.6

\*Veterans may have served during more than one period of wartime.

## A majority of veterans in State prison, but less than a third of nonveteran inmates, were white

Because nearly 95% of veterans are men, virtually all incarcerated veterans in 1997 were men (table 2). Among nonveterans women accounted for 7% of State prisoners, 8% of Federal prisoners, and 11% of local jail inmates. In contrast, women accounted for 1% of the veterans in either State or Federal prison, and 2% of veterans in local jails.

Veterans were also more likely than other inmates to be white non-Hispanic. Among State prisoners,

over half (53%) of veterans were white non-Hispanics, compared to nearly a third (31%) of nonveterans. Among Federal prisoners the percentage of veterans who were white (50%) was nearly double that of nonveterans (26%).

In both prisons and jails, black non-Hispanics made up the largest share of nonveteran inmates. Blacks made up 48% of the nonveterans in State prison, compared to 37% of veterans. The percentage of black inmates varied less by veteran status in Federal prison (38% of nonveterans, 35% of veterans) and local jails (41% of nonveterans and 37% of veterans).

The percentage of Hispanics was sharply lower among veterans than nonveterans. In both State and Federal prison, as well as local jails, the percentage of Hispanics among veterans was less than half that of nonveterans. Federal prisoners displayed the largest difference, with Hispanics accounting for 30% of nonveterans and 12% of veterans.

## Among State prisoners, the median age of veterans was 10 years higher than that of nonveterans

Veterans were much older than other prison and jail inmates. Among both State (41 years old) and Federal (43) prisoners, the median age of veterans was over age 40, while that of nonveterans was age 31 and 35, respectively. Nonveterans (63%) were almost 3 times as likely as veterans (23%) to be under age 35. In contrast, 32% of veterans in State prison were at least age 45, compared to 10% of nonveterans.

Veterans were also more likely to have been married than nonveterans. Overall, 71% of veterans and 39% of nonveterans in State prison said they had been married at some time in their lives. However, the percentages of veterans (22%) and nonveterans (16%) who said they were currently married were much more similar.

Veterans reported much higher levels of completed education than other inmates. Among State prisoners, veterans (32%) were about 3 times more likely than nonveterans (11%) to have attended college. Even higher levels of college attendance were reported by veterans in local jail (37%) and Federal prison (42%). In contrast, 44% of nonveterans in State prison reported that they had neither completed high school nor attained a GED, compared to 12% of veterans.

**Table 2. Selected characteristics of State and Federal prisoners, and local jail inmates, by veteran status**

	Percent of prisoners, 1997				Percent of local jail inmates, 1996	
	State		Federal			
	Veterans	Non-veterans	Veterans	Non-veterans	Veterans	Non-veterans
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	99.2%	93.0%	98.9%	91.7%	98.5%	88.7%
Female	0.8	7.0	1.1	8.3	1.5	11.3
<b>Race/Hispanic origin</b>						
White non-Hispanic	52.8%	30.5%	49.8%	26.5%	51.9%	35.3%
Black non-Hispanic	37.2	47.8	34.7	38.4	36.6	41.3
Hispanic	6.9	18.4	11.9	30.0	8.6	19.8
Other	3.1	3.2	3.5	5.2	2.9	3.6
<b>Age</b>						
24 or younger	1.9%	22.3%	1.3%	10.2%	4.6%	34.3%
25-34	21.5	40.5	22.3	39.1	29.6	38.4
35-44	44.5	27.3	30.3	30.7	42.4	21.5
45-54	22.0	8.0	27.1	14.4	17.7	4.8
55 or older	10.1	1.9	19.0	5.6	5.7	1.0
Median	41 yrs.	31 yrs.	43 yrs.	35 yrs.	38 yrs.	28 yrs.
<b>Marital status</b>						
Married	21.8%	15.9%	33.7%	29.8%	21.4%	14.9%
Widowed	3.7	1.6	2.9	1.5	3.6	1.1
Divorced	38.6	15.7	35.1	18.0	34.7	13.1
Separated	7.4	5.6	5.5	5.9	12.6	8.1
Never married	28.6	61.2	22.8	44.8	27.8	62.7
<b>Education completed</b>						
8th grade or less	4.3%	15.4%	3.0%	13.3%	4.0%	14.4%
Some high school	7.4	28.2	4.1	16.3	9.5	36.7
GED	31.1	31.5	24.1	27.3	21.8	18.5
High school graduate	25.3	14.2	27.2	19.0	28.1	17.8
Some college or more	32.0	10.7	41.6	24.2	36.7	12.7

## Veteran inmates were more likely to be violent offenders, less likely to be drug offenders

A majority (55%) of the veterans in State prison were sentenced for a violent offense, compared to 46% of nonveterans (table 3). Among Federal prisoners fewer than a quarter of veterans (22%) were violent offenders, but the percentage was still lower among nonveterans (13%). Veterans in both State (14%) and Federal (51%) prison were less likely to be drug offenders than nonveterans (22% and 65%, respectively).

Among State prisoners veterans (18%) were over twice as likely as nonveterans (7%) to be sentenced for a sexual assault, including rape. While veterans also had a slightly higher percentage of homicide offenders (17%) than nonveterans (13%), they were no more likely than other State prisoners to be sentenced for other types of violent crime. In local jails, sexual assault was the only violent offense for which a greater share of veterans (6%) than nonveterans (3%) were held. (For further data on sexual assaults and military personnel, see box below.)

About equal percentages of veterans and nonveterans in State prison were sentenced for property and public-order offenses. Among Federal prisoners, veterans had a higher percentage of fraud offenders (9%) than nonveterans (4%), but were otherwise equally likely to be convicted of property or public-order offenses.

Among local jail inmates veterans had a similar percentage of both violent (27%) and property (25%) offenders as nonveterans (26% and 27%, respectively). Veterans (17%) in local jails were less likely to be drug offenders than nonveterans (23%), but more likely to be public-order offenders (31% compared to 23%).

**Table 3. Current offense of State and Federal prisoners, and local jail inmates, by veteran status**

Current offense	Percent of prisoners, 1997				Percent of local jail inmates, 1996	
	State		Federal			
	Veterans	Non-veterans	Veterans	Non-veterans	Veterans	Non-veterans
<b>Violent offenses</b>	55.1%	46.1%	22.4%	13.4%	26.7%	26.3%
Homicide <sup>a</sup>	16.8	12.8	2.3	1.4	2.8	3.3
Sexual assault <sup>b</sup>	17.8	7.2	1.6	0.7	6.3	2.8
Robbery	10.4	14.7	13.6	9.3	6.4	6.6
Assault	8.2	9.5	1.9	1.2	9.4	11.9
Other violent	1.9	1.9	3.0	0.9	1.8	1.8
<b>Property offenses</b>	20.3%	22.2%	10.9%	6.1%	25.1%	27.1%
Burglary	8.9	10.9	0.1	0.4	6.1	7.9
Larceny	4.3	4.2	1.1	0.4	8.5	7.9
Motor vehicle theft	1.4	1.9	0.2	0.3	1.6	2.7
Fraud	3.2	2.6	8.7	4.2	5.8	4.4
Stolen property	1.5	1.6	0.5	0.5	1.6	2.2
Other property	0.9	1.0	0.2	0.4	1.4	2.1
<b>Drug offenses</b>	14.4%	21.5%	51.3%	64.6%	16.5%	22.7%
Possession	4.7	9.4	6.5	12.3	8.4	11.9
Trafficking	9.0	11.6	41.3	46.3	6.7	9.5
Other drug	0.7	0.6	3.5	5.9	1.4	1.3
<b>Public-order offenses</b>	10.2%	9.8%	14.6%	14.8%	31.3%	23.4%
Weapons	1.7	2.6	7.8	6.7	2.3	2.3
Other public-order	8.4	7.3	6.8	8.1	29.0	21.1
<b>Other/unspecified</b>	0.1%	0.3%	0.8%	1.1%	0.4%	0.5%

<sup>a</sup>Includes murder and manslaughter.

<sup>b</sup>Includes rape and other sexual assault.

## Sex offenders accounted for 1 in 3 prisoners held in military correctional facilities at yearend 1997

The high prevalence of sex offenders among incarcerated veterans is also reflected in data collected on persons still on active military duty. Since 1994, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Corrections Council has annually reported data to the Bureau of Justice Statistics regarding persons incarcerated in military correctional facilities. These facilities, administered by the DoD, hold inmates whose offenses fell under the Uniform Code of Military Justice rather than civilian Federal, State, or local jurisdiction. (See *Methodology*.)

In 1997 sexual assault was the most common offense for which inmates were held in military prisons, accounting for nearly a third (31%) of all military prisoners. Sexual assaults have also been the most common offense in each year since reporting began. All other violent offenses

accounted for 21% of military prisoners, followed by drug (20%), property (17%), and public-order (2%) offenses. Another 8% of military prisoners were sentenced for military offenses, including AWOL, desertion, and insubordination.

Type of offense	Percent of prisoners in military facilities, 1997
<b>Violent</b>	52.2%
Homicide	11.1
Sexual assault	30.6
Robbery	1.7
Assault	8.6
Other violent	0.3
<b>Property</b>	17.2
Drug	20.2
Public-order	1.7
Military offenses	7.6
Other	1.2
Number of prisoners	2,466

Note: For more data on military correctional facilities and inmates, see *Correctional Populations in the United States, 1997*, NCJ 177613, forthcoming.

## Among violent State prisoners, over two-thirds of veterans knew their victims

Among violent State prisoners, veterans (69%) were more likely than nonveterans (51%) to have known their victims (table 4). Veterans (22%) were twice as likely as other violent State prisoners (9%) to have victimized a relative (excluding spouses). Veterans (11%) were as likely as nonveterans (9%) to report victimizing an intimate, such as a spouse, girlfriend or boyfriend. A slightly higher percentage of veterans (32%) than nonveterans (27%) reported victimizing friends and acquaintances.

About two-thirds of violent veterans, and half of other violent State prisoners reported victimizing a female. A majority (54%) of veterans, compared to 36% of nonveterans, said that females were the only victims of their violent

offense. About a third (36%) of veterans, but a majority of nonveterans (53%) said that only men had been the victims of their violent crime. A tenth of both groups reported both male and female victims. Fewer veterans (34%) than nonveterans (44%) reported using a weapon during their violent offense.

Veterans (36%) were more likely than nonveterans (20%) to have victimized a juvenile (under 18 years old). In particular, twice as many veterans (20%) as nonveterans (9%) reported that their youngest victim was a child, age 12 or younger.

## Combat veterans in prison were no more likely to be violent offenders than other veterans

Among veterans in State prison, those who reported seeing combat duty during their military service were no more likely to be violent offenders than

other veterans (55% of both) (table 5). Overall, the offense distribution of combat veterans showed few differences from that of noncombat veterans. Combat veterans were also as likely to be property (19%) or drug (14%) offenders as noncombat veterans (21% and 15%, respectively).

Veterans who had served in the military during the Vietnam War era (1964-1973) were more likely (59%) than other veterans in State prison (52%) to be violent offenders. In particular, higher percentages of Vietnam-era veterans were sentenced for homicide (20%) compared to other veterans (14%). Vietnam-era veterans (16%) were less likely than other veterans (23%) to be property offenders. About equal percentages of Vietnam-era veterans were held for drug (15%) or public-order (10%) offenses as other veterans (14% for drug and 10% for public-order offenses).

**Table 4. Victim characteristics and use of weapon, by veteran status of violent State prisoners, 1997**

Victim characteristic	Percent of violent State prisoners, 1997	
	Veterans	Nonveterans
<b>Gender of victim(s)</b>		
Male	36.1%	52.7%
Female	53.9	36.1
Both males and females	9.9	11.3
<b>Age of youngest victim</b>		
12 or younger	20.4%	9.4%
13-17	15.4	10.4
18-24	13.6	21.2
25-34	22.0	31.4
35-54	22.3	23.2
55 or older	6.3	4.4
<b>Victim-offender relationship</b>		
Knew victim <sup>a</sup>	69.0%	51.1%
Relative	22.4	9.3
Intimate <sup>b</sup>	11.4	8.8
Friend/acquaintance	31.8	27.3
Other <sup>c</sup>	5.2	7.1
Knew none of victims	31.0	48.9
<b>Use of weapon</b>		
Yes	33.6%	43.8%
No	66.4	56.2

<sup>a</sup>More than one victim may have been reported.

<sup>b</sup>Includes (ex-)spouse, (ex-)boyfriend, and (ex-)girlfriend.

<sup>c</sup>Includes those known by sight only.

**Table 5. Current offense of veterans in State prison, by Vietnam-era service and combat-duty service, 1997**

Current offense	Percent of veterans in State prison, 1997			
	Vietnam-era service <sup>a</sup>		Served in combat duty	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Violent offenses</b>	59.4%	52.3%	54.9%	55.1%
Homicide <sup>b</sup>	20.4	14.4	19.6	16.0
Sexual assault <sup>c</sup>	20.0	16.4	16.2	18.3
Robbery	8.0	11.4	8.0	10.9
Assault	8.8	8.3	9.1	8.0
Other violent	2.2	1.7	2.0	1.9
<b>Property offenses</b>	15.6%	23.1%	18.5%	20.7%
Burglary	6.9	10.4	7.8	9.2
Larceny	4.1	4.4	4.3	4.3
Motor vehicle theft	0.7	1.7	0.7	1.6
Fraud	1.8	4.0	3.7	3.1
Stolen property	0.9	1.8	0.7	1.8
Other property	1.2	0.8	1.4	0.8
<b>Drug offenses</b>	14.6%	14.4%	13.7%	14.6%
Possession	5.1	4.6	3.9	5.0
Trafficking	8.7	9.1	8.9	9.0
Other drug	0.7	0.7	0.9	0.6
<b>Public-order offenses</b>	10.4%	10.1%	12.5%	9.6%
Weapons	0.9	2.1	1.2	1.9
Other public-order	9.5	7.9	11.3	7.8
<b>Other/unspecified</b>	0.0	0.1	0.4	0.0
Number of prisoners	44,063	81,090	25,741	103,590

<sup>a</sup>Defined as military service during 1964-73.

<sup>b</sup>Includes murder and manslaughter.

<sup>c</sup>Includes rape and other sexual assault.

## Among State prisoners, veterans had less extensive criminal histories than nonveterans

In State prisons veterans had less extensive criminal histories than other inmates (table 6). At the time of their arrest, veterans were less likely than other State prisoners to be on probation or parole supervision, bail, pretrial release or other forms of conditional release from custody. About a third of veterans (36%) and half of nonveterans (49%) reported some type of criminal justice status when arrested.

Veterans in State prison were less likely than nonveterans to be recidivists (those inmates with a history of probation or incarceration sentences prior to their current confinement). Nearly a third of veterans were first-time offenders, while about a quarter of other prisoners did not report a prior sentence. Veterans in State prison were also less likely to have lengthy criminal records. Offenders with at least three prior probation or incarceration sentences accounted for 37% of veterans, and 44% of the nonveterans in State prison.

In both local jails and Federal prisons, the criminal histories of veterans and nonveterans were more similar. An equal percentage (27%) of both veterans and other local jail inmates were first-time offenders, without prior sentences. Veterans (45%) were also as likely as other jail inmates (44%) to report three or more prior sentences.

In Federal prison veterans (60%) were as likely as nonveterans (61%) to report a prior sentence. About 30% of both veterans and other Federal prisoners reported three or more prior probation or incarceration sentences.

## Criminal histories of combat veterans were less serious than other veterans in prison

Veterans who had seen combat during their military service (29%) were less likely to have a criminal justice status when arrested than other veterans (38%) (table 7). Forty percent of combat veterans were first-time offenders, compared to 27% of noncombat

**Table 6. Criminal history of State and Federal prisoners, and local jails inmates, by veteran status**

	Percent of prisoners, 1997				Percent of local jail inmates, 1996	
	State		Federal		Veterans	Non-veterans
	Veterans	Non-veterans	Veterans	Non-veterans		
<b>Status at time of current arrest</b>						
None	64.1%	51.1%	73.1%	72.7%	53.2%	45.5%
Status <sup>a</sup>	35.9	48.9	26.9	27.3	46.8	54.5
On parole	21.0	24.9	16.0	13.1	13.0	13.1
On probation	14.4	23.3	10.5	13.9	25.6	30.9
On bail or pretrial release	--	--	--	--	6.6	8.9
Other	0.5	0.7	0.4	0.3	1.6	1.7
<b>Criminal history</b>						
None	30.1%	22.9%	39.7%	38.7%	27.3%	27.3%
Priors	69.9	77.1	60.3	61.3	72.7	72.7
Violent recidivists <sup>b</sup>	44.3	47.2	26.4	22.7	33.4	34.0
Drug recidivists only	2.3	3.1	8.0	10.6	4.5	7.3
Other recidivists <sup>c</sup>	23.3	26.8	25.8	28.0	34.8	31.4
<b>Number of prior probation/incarceration sentences</b>						
0	30.1%	22.9%	39.7%	38.7%	27.3%	27.3%
1	17.8	16.7	16.2	17.6	17.4	17.4
2	14.9	16.6	14.4	14.3	10.5	11.4
3-5	22.1	25.3	22.4	18.5	21.3	20.1
6-10	9.6	12.4	4.6	8.3	14.3	15.2
11 or more	5.5	6.1	2.7	2.7	9.3	8.6

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

--Data not collected.

<sup>a</sup>In cases where jail inmates had multiple types of criminal justice status when arrested, probation and parole supervision was taken as the primary status.

<sup>b</sup>Recidivists with at least one current or past violent offense.

<sup>c</sup>Includes recidivists with unknown offense types.

**Table 7. Criminal history of veterans in State prison, by Vietnam-era service and combat-duty service, 1997**

	Percent of veterans in State prison, 1997			
	Vietnam-era service <sup>a</sup>		Served in combat duty	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Status at time of current arrest</b>				
None	70.7%	60.5%	71.5%	62.1%
Status	29.3	39.5	28.5	37.9
<b>Criminal history</b>				
None	28.7%	30.8%	40.3%	27.4%
Priors	71.3	69.2	59.7	72.6
Violent recidivists <sup>b</sup>	48.4	41.7	38.6	45.8
Drug recidivists only	2.1	2.5	1.6	2.4
Other recidivists <sup>c</sup>	20.8	25.0	19.5	24.4

Note: Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>Defined as military service during 1964-73.

<sup>b</sup>Recidivists with at least one current or past violent offense.

<sup>c</sup>Includes recidivists with unknown offense types.

veterans. Combat veterans (39%) were also less likely to be violent recidivists than other veterans (46%).

Overall, the criminal histories reported by Vietnam-era veterans in State prison were similar to those of other veterans. Similar percentages of Vietnam-era veterans (29%) and other veterans (31%) were first-time

offenders. Vietnam-era veterans (29%) were less likely than other veterans in State prison (40%) to have a criminal justice status at the time of their arrest.

## Veterans' sentences averaged 3 years longer than other State prisoners

On average veterans were serving longer prison sentences than other inmates (table 8). Among State prisoners, the mean maximum sentence length of veterans (191 months) was 3 years longer than that of nonveterans (152 months). Veterans (26%) were more likely to report sentences of 20 or more years than nonveterans (20%), as well as life or death sentences (11% of veterans, 7% of nonveterans).

These differences may reflect the higher percentage of violent offenders among veterans. Since violent crimes carry longer sentences, veterans should be expected to have longer sentences than nonveterans. In addition, veterans reported longer sentences than other prisoners with the same offenses.

Type of offense	Mean maximum sentence length, State prisoners, 1997	
	Veterans	Nonveterans
Violent	264 mos.	214 mos.
Homicide	406	328
Sexual assault	239	231
Robbery	267	193
Assault	151	141
Property	123	116
Drug	118	107
Public-order	86	79

Among violent offenders in State prison, the mean sentence length reported by veterans (264 months) was about 4 years longer than that of nonveterans (214 months). In particular, veterans convicted of homicide (406 months) and robbery (267 months) reported mean sentence lengths that were over 6 years longer than those of nonveterans (328 months and 193 months, respectively).

Among nonviolent offenders the sentences of veterans and nonveterans were more similar. The mean drug offense sentence for veterans (118 months) was about a year longer than that of nonveterans (107 months).

For both property and public-order offenders, the mean sentences reported by veterans (123 and 86 months, respectively) were 7 months longer than those of nonveterans (116 and 79 months, respectively).

Among Federal prisoners, there was less variation in sentence lengths. On average the sentences reported by veterans (135 months) were less than a year longer than those reported by nonveterans (124 months). The percentages of veterans reporting sentences of 20 or more years (15%), as well as life or death sentences (5%), were similar to nonveterans (13% and 3%, respectively). The total time expected to be served by veterans (109 months) and nonveterans (103 months) varied by only 6 months.

Jail sentences showed no variation by veteran status (table 9). The mean sentence lengths reported by veterans (13 months) and nonveterans (12 months) were nearly equal. Veterans (8 months) and nonveterans (9 months) also expected to serve equal amounts of jail time prior to release.

**Table 8. Maximum sentence length, and time to be served until release, by veteran status, State and Federal prisoners, 1997**

	Percent of prisoners, 1997			
	State		Federal	
	Veterans	Nonveterans	Veterans	Nonveterans
<b>Maximum sentence length</b>				
Less than 12 months	2.3%	4.0%	2.2%	2.5%
12-35 months	9.5	12.3	10.5	11.1
36-59 months	11.1	12.9	12.7	12.9
60-119 months	17.9	20.9	27.5	29.1
120-179 months	12.9	13.4	17.2	19.2
180-239 months	9.1	9.1	9.4	9.4
240+ months	26.1	20.1	15.4	12.9
Life/death	11.1	7.3	5.1	2.9
Mean <sup>a</sup>	191 mo	152 mo	135 mo	124 mo
<b>Estimated total time to be served on current sentence<sup>b</sup></b>				
Less than 24 months	15.2%	18.5%	9.5%	9.2%
24-47 months	17.5	20.7	15.2	15.2
48-71 months	12.7	15.5	15.6	17.3
72-119 months	16.0	16.4	22.8	24.4
120-179 months	9.7	9.0	16.4	14.9
180-239 months	7.5	4.7	6.9	7.5
240+ months	10.1	6.4	8.3	6.6
No release expected	5.2	2.9	2.5	1.3
Don't know	6.0	5.9	2.8	3.6
Mean <sup>c</sup>	107 mo	87 mo	109 mo	103 mo

<sup>a</sup>Excludes sentences to life or death.

<sup>b</sup>Based on time served when interviewed plus time to be served until the expected date of release.

<sup>c</sup>Excludes inmates who do not expect to be released.

**Table 9. Maximum sentence length and time to be served until release, by veteran status, local jail inmates, 1996**

	Percent of inmates sentenced to jail, 1996 <sup>a</sup>	
	Veterans	Nonveterans
<b>Maximum sentence length</b>		
Less than 3 months	21.8%	22.5%
3-6 months	24.9	27.1
7-12 months	27.6	25.9
13-24 months	10.0	12.0
25-36 months	8.9	5.7
37-60 months	6.7	6.8
Mean	13.2 mo	12.3 mo
<b>Estimated total time to be served on current sentence<sup>b</sup></b>		
Less than 3 months	30.0%	26.2%
3-6 months	28.7	30.3
7-12 months	24.3	25.6
13-24 months	13.2	9.7
25-36 months	1.7	4.4
37-60 months	2.1	3.6
Mean	7.6 mo	8.6 mo

<sup>a</sup>Excludes unsentenced jail inmates, and those sentenced but awaiting transfer to prison or juvenile facilities.

<sup>b</sup>Based on time served when interviewed plus time to be served until the expected date of release.



## Veterans were less likely than other inmates to report using drugs in the month before their current offense

Among State prisoners, veterans (79%) were less likely than nonveterans (84%) to report past drug use (table 10). The difference in drug use in the month before the offense was greater (45% of veterans, 58% of nonveterans). In particular, fewer veterans (27%) than nonveterans (41%) reported marijuana use during this period. Veterans (26%) were also less likely than nonveterans (34%) to have been under the influence of drugs while committing their offense.

In Federal prisons, veterans were as likely as other inmates (73% of both) to report past drug use. Veterans (40%) were less likely than nonveterans (46%) to have used drugs in the month before the offense. In local jails, veterans (81%) also reported levels of prior drug use similar to nonveterans (83%), but lower levels (44%) of drug use in the month prior to the offense than nonveterans (50%). At the time of the offense, veterans in both Federal prison (21%) and local jail (29%) were about as likely as nonveterans (23% Federal, 32% local jails) to have been under the influence of drugs.

Among both State and Federal prisoners, as well as local jail inmates, the percentage of veterans who reported prior drug use was equal to, or lower than the percentage of nonveterans. However, in all three groups, the percentage of veterans who reported past use of specific drug types was often higher than that of nonveterans. For example, while veterans (81%) were about as likely as other jail inmates (83%) to report any prior drug use, veterans were more likely to have used heroin or other opiates (31%), depressants (38%), stimulants (42%), and hallucinogens (38%) than nonveterans (23%, 29%, 32%, and 31%, respectively). These findings suggest that among past drug users in prisons and jails, veterans were more likely than nonveterans to have used multiple types of drugs.

**Table 10. Drug use of State and Federal prisoners, and local jail inmates, by type of drug and veteran status**

Type of drug	Percent of inmates who reported —					
	Ever using drugs		Using drugs in the month before offense		Using drugs at the time of offense	
	Veterans	Non-veterans	Veterans	Non-veterans	Veterans	Non-veterans
<b>State prisoners, 1997</b>						
Any drug <sup>a</sup>	79.0%	83.6%	45.4%	58.1%	26.0%	33.5%
Marijuana/hashish	73.4	77.5	27.2	40.9	8.9	16.0
Cocaine/crack	49.3	49.1	21.6	25.5	12.9	15.1
Heroin/opiates	27.6	24.0	6.6	9.6	4.5	5.7
Depressants <sup>b</sup>	28.9	22.9	5.1	5.1	1.9	1.8
Stimulants <sup>c</sup>	37.0	27.0	9.5	8.9	4.9	4.2
Hallucinogens <sup>d</sup>	31.8	28.2	2.0	4.3	1.2	1.9
Inhalants	14.4	14.4	0.5	1.0	--	--
<b>Federal prisoners, 1997</b>						
Any drug <sup>a</sup>	72.5%	73.0%	40.2%	45.6%	21.3%	22.6%
Marijuana/hashish	66.5	65.1	25.2	31.3	11.0	10.8
Cocaine/crack	46.3	44.6	18.9	20.1	7.7	9.6
Heroin/opiates	20.9	15.3	6.6	5.2	3.1	3.0
Depressants <sup>b</sup>	22.2	15.5	2.5	3.3	0.7	1.1
Stimulants <sup>c</sup>	30.4	19.3	9.3	7.3	5.8	3.8
Hallucinogens <sup>d</sup>	28.2	17.5	1.6	1.7	0.9	0.8
Inhalants	9.3	7.5	0.7	0.5	--	--
<b>Local jail inmates, 1996</b>						
Any drug <sup>a</sup>	81.0%	82.5%	44.1%	49.5%	28.8%	32.0%
Marijuana/hashish	77.3	78.3	25.9	32.9	11.5	16.7
Cocaine/crack	54.3	49.9	19.7	18.0	12.2	11.3
Heroin/opiates	31.4	22.9	6.3	5.9	3.8	3.8
Depressants <sup>b</sup>	37.9	28.8	2.8	4.2	1.0	1.8
Stimulants <sup>c</sup>	42.5	32.4	7.1	7.4	3.9	4.3
Hallucinogens <sup>d</sup>	38.3	31.4	1.5	3.4	0.8	1.2
Inhalants	20.1	16.4	0.7	0.7	0.2	0.2

Note: Detail adds to more than total because prisoners may have used more than one type of drug.

--Not reported.

<sup>a</sup>Other unspecified drugs are included in the totals.

<sup>b</sup>Includes barbiturates, tranquilizers, and Quaalude.

<sup>c</sup>Includes amphetamine and methamphetamine.

<sup>d</sup>Includes LSD and PCP.

Veterans were also more likely to have used intravenous (IV) drugs than nonveterans. Among both State and Federal prisoners, as well as jail inmates, a higher percentage of veterans than nonveterans reported prior IV drug use. Veterans in State prison (25%) or local jails (24%) were the most likely to report prior IV drug use, followed by veterans in Federal prison (17%). Among nonveterans, State prisoners (19%) reported the highest level of IV drug use, followed by local jail (16%) and Federal inmates (11%).

	Ever used a needle to inject drugs for non-medical reasons
State prisoners	
Veterans	24.5%
Nonveterans	19.4
Federal prisoners	
Veterans	17.1%
Nonveterans	11.5
Local jail inmates	
Veterans	23.9%
Nonveterans	16.2

### Less than a third of incarcerated combat veterans used drugs in the month before their offense

Veterans in State prison who saw combat during their military service were less likely to report prior drug use (69%) than noncombat veterans (82%) (table 11). Fewer than a third (30%) of combat veterans reported drug use in the month before their offense, compared to half (49%) of other veterans. About a quarter of both combat (23%) and other veterans (25%) reported prior use of IV drugs.

In their reports of prior drug abuse, Vietnam-era veterans varied little from other veterans in State prison. Vietnam-era veterans (77%) were about as likely as other veterans (80%) to report ever using drugs, and slightly less likely to report drug use in the month before the offense (41%, compared to 47% of other veterans). However, a third (32%) of Vietnam-era veterans reported prior IV drug use. Other veterans in State prison (20%) were no more likely than nonveterans (19%) to report prior IV drug use.

### Reports of prior alcohol abuse and dependence were higher among veteran inmates

Veterans were more likely than other prison and jail inmates to report a variety of alcohol abuse indicators (table 12). According to the CAGE diagnostic instrument, 31% of veterans in State prison and 35% of those in local jails reported experiences that are consistent with a history of alcohol abuse or dependence. Nonveterans in both State prison (24%) and local jail (25%) were less likely to report these signs of alcohol dependence. Overall, fewer Federal prisoners were alcohol dependent, but reports were higher among veterans (21%) than nonveterans (15%).

**Table 11. Prior drug use of veterans in State prison, by Vietnam-era service and combat-duty service, 1997**

	Percent of veterans in State prison who reported —		
	Ever using drugs	Ever using intravenous drugs	Using drugs in the month before the offense
Vietnam-era service*			
Yes	77.2%	31.8%	41.1%
No	80.4	20.5	47.4
Served in combat duty			
Yes	68.5%	22.8%	29.8%
No	81.8	25.0	49.5

\*Defined as service during the years 1964-1973.

**Table 12. Alcohol dependence and experiences of State and Federal prisoners, and local jail inmates, by veteran status**

	Percent of prisoners, 1997				Percent of local jail inmates, 1996	
	State		Federal		Veterans	Non-veterans
	Veterans	Non-veterans	Veterans	Non-veterans		
History of alcohol dependence*	30.6%	23.6%	20.9%	15.5%	34.6%	25.2%
Because of your drinking, have you ever —						
Lost a job?	14.3%	9.7%	6.8%	4.7%	16.6%	10.9%
Been arrested or held at a police station?	37.2	28.4	24.8	18.3	47.8	30.4
While drinking have you ever —						
Driven a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol?	58.8%	45.0%	55.5%	41.0%	61.6%	38.6%
Gotten into a physical fight?	40.6	38.0	31.4	21.3	45.2	35.4
Had as much as a fifth of liquor in 1 day, 20 drinks, 3 six-packs of beer, or 3 bottles of wine?	44.4	40.6	33.4	29.8	48.6	39.2

\*Measured by 3 or more positive CAGE responses.

For description of the CAGE diagnostic measure see *Methodology*.

CAGE is an acronym for the four questions used by the diagnostic instrument to assess alcohol dependence and abuse. Respondents are asked if they have ever attempted to (C)ut back on drinking; ever been (A)nnoyed by others' criticism of their drinking; ever felt (G)uilty about their drinking; and ever needed a drink first thing in the morning as an (E)ye opener or to steady the nerves. The CAGE instrument determines a person's likelihood of alcohol abuse by the number of positive responses to these questions. (For additional information on the CAGE instrument, see *Methodology*.)

A consistently higher percentage of veterans also reported engaging in troubled behaviors associated with past alcohol abuse. Veterans in both State (59%) and Federal (55%) prison were more likely to report driving drunk in the past than nonveterans (45% and 41%, respectively). About half (48%) of veterans, but less than a third (30%) of nonveterans in local jails reported a previous alcohol-related arrest. Veterans in local jails were also more likely to report alcohol-related physical fights (45%) than nonveterans (35%). Prior binge drinking incidents — consuming as much as a fifth of liquor in 1 day — were reported by 49% of veterans, compared to 39% of other jail inmates.

According to the CAGE diagnostic questionnaire, similar percentages of Vietnam-era (33%) and other veterans (30%) reported signs of alcohol dependence (table 13). Vietnam-era veterans were also equally likely to report alcohol-related physical fights (41%) and binge-drinking incidents (46%) as other veterans (40% and 44%, respectively). Drunk driving reports were slightly higher among Vietnam-era veterans (63%) than other veterans (57%) in State prison.

Similar percentages of combat (28%) and noncombat (31%) veterans reported signs of alcohol dependence. Combat veterans in State prison were about as likely to report a prior alcohol-related arrest (35%) or a binge-drinking experience (42%) as other veterans (38% and 45%, respectively).

#### Incarcerated veterans and nonveterans reported equal participation in substance abuse treatment

Veterans' substance abuse treatment histories were similar to those of other inmates (table 14). Since their admission, veterans in both State (34%) and Federal (30%) prisons reported similar levels of participation in substance abuse treatment or programs as nonveterans (32% and 28%, respectively). Veterans in local jails also reported the same level of participation as other inmates (10% of both) in substance abuse treatment or programs since admission.

Veterans received the same types of treatment as nonveterans. Among State prisoners 12% of both groups said they had received professional treatment, such as a residential facility or counseling, while similar percentages (29% of veterans, 27% of nonveterans) reported taking part in programs such as self-help groups and education programs. Veterans (59%) were also as likely as other State prisoners (56%) to report participation in substance abuse treatment or other programs at some time in their past.

**Table 13. Alcohol dependence and experiences of veterans in State prison, by Vietnam-era service and combat-duty service, 1997**

	Percent of veterans in State prison, 1997			
	Vietnam-era service <sup>a</sup>		Served in combat duty	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
History of alcohol dependence <sup>b</sup>	32.9%	29.8%	27.6%	31.5%
Because of your drinking, have you ever —				
Lost a job?	16.0%	13.3%	12.4%	14.8%
Been arrested or held at a police station?	40.3	35.9	34.7	37.9
While drinking have you ever —				
Driven a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol?	63.3%	56.6%	56.0%	59.6%
Gotten into a physical fight?	41.5	40.5	36.4	41.8
Had as much as a fifth of liquor in 1 day, 20 drinks, 3 six-packs of beer, or 3 bottles of wine?	45.7	44.2	42.3	45.0

<sup>a</sup>Defined as service during the years 1964-1973.

<sup>b</sup>Measured by 3 or more positive CAGE responses.

For description of the CAGE diagnostic measure see *Methodology*.

**Table 14. Substance abuse treatment history of State and Federal prisoners, and local jail inmates, by veteran status**

Type of treatment	Percent of prisoners, 1997				Percent of local jail inmates, 1996	
	State		Federal			
	Veterans	Non-veterans	Veterans	Non-veterans	Veterans	Non-veterans
<b>Ever any treatment or programs</b>	58.7%	56.1%	50.6%	45.7%	48.4%	41.5%
Any treatment	37.4	34.1	30.8	23.5	40.3	31.6
Other alcohol/drug programs	46.3	42.6	39.6	34.7	38.6	31.1
<b>Participated while under correctional supervision</b>	47.2%	47.9%	41.3%	38.8%	31.9%	28.4%
Any treatment	25.6	26.2	21.2	18.5	21.7	17.5
In prison/jail	19.2	19.7	15.8	14.9	13.3	10.3
On probation/parole	15.1	15.0	8.7	8.3	15.5	12.2
Other alcohol/drug programs	38.4	37.4	32.5	30.7	25.8	22.3
In prison/jail	34.9	33.0	29.1	27.2	18.0	16.3
On probation/parole	16.5	17.3	10.7	10.0	19.7	14.7
<b>Participated since admission</b>	33.7%	32.3%	30.2%	27.8%	10.1%	10.3%
Any treatment	12.3	11.9	11.0	10.3	3.2	3.4
Residential facility or unit	6.9	6.9	8.1	7.1	1.3	1.6
Counseling by a professional	6.2	5.0	3.4	3.9	1.1	1.1
Detoxification unit	1.2	0.7	0.0	0.2	0.6	0.8
Maintenance drug	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.3
Other alcohol/drug programs	29.3	27.2	24.7	22.8	8.8	8.9
Self-help group/peer counseling	22.9	22.7	12.1	11.0	8.0	7.6
Education program	15.7	12.2	17.6	16.6	3.3	3.1

Note: Detail adds to more than total because prisoners may have participated in more than one type of treatment program.

## Incarcerated veterans were more likely to report a mental illness

From responses to survey questions regarding their mental health, a higher percentage of veterans reported a mental illness than nonveteran

inmates (table 15). Inmates were considered to be mentally ill if they met one of the following two criteria: they reported a current mental or emotional condition, or they reported an overnight stay in a mental hospital or treatment program.

The varying rates of mental illness by veteran status were most evident in the local jail and Federal prison populations. Among jail inmates, 25% of veterans were identified as mentally ill, compared to 15% of nonveterans. Reports of mental illness were much lower in Federal prison, but the percentage of veterans reporting an indicator of mental illness (13%) was about twice that of nonveterans (6%). In State prison, the reported rates of mental illness among veterans (19%) and nonveterans (16%) were more similar.

Among State prisoners, veterans who had seen combat duty during their service (22%) reported similar rates of mental illness as noncombat veterans (19%). Veterans who served during the Vietnam War era were also as likely as other veterans (19% of both) to report mental illness.

**Table 15. Mental health status of State and Federal prisoners, and local jail inmates, by veteran status**

	Percent of prisoners, 1997				Percent of local jail inmates, 1996	
	State		Federal			
	Veterans	Non-veterans	Veterans	Non-veterans	Veterans	Non-veterans
Mentally ill*	19.3%	15.8%	13.2%	6.4%	24.6%	15.2%
Reported a mental or emotional condition	11.2	9.9	8.5	4.2	16.5	9.6
Admitted overnight to a mental hospital or treatment program	14.3	10.2	9.0	3.9	16.2	9.4

\*Reported either a mental or emotional condition or an overnight stay in a mental hospital or treatment program. See *Mental Health and Treatment of Inmates and Probationers*, NCJ 174463.

**Table 16. Employment, income and housing of State and Federal prisoners, and local jail inmates, by veteran status**

	Percent of prisoners, 1997				Percent of local jail inmates, 1996	
	State		Federal			
	Veterans	Non-veterans	Veterans	Non-veterans	Veterans	Non-veterans
<b>Employment during month before current arrest</b>						
Unemployed	22.5%	33.2%	27.9%	28.4%	27.7%	36.8%
Employed	77.5	66.8	72.1	71.6	72.3	63.2
Full time	69.3	53.7	64.6	59.3	59.2	47.9
Part time	5.6	10.3	6.3	9.9	8	10.7
Occasional	2.7	2.8	1.2	2.4	5.1	4.5
<b>Personal income in month before current arrest</b>						
Less than \$200	12.7%	19.5%	14.7%	18.7%	16.5%	25.3%
\$200-599	17.2	22.5	14.5	15.1	20.8	26.0
\$600-999	17.3	16.9	13.5	15.5	15.9	17.7
\$1,000-1,999	26.9	22.3	22.2	22.1	29.1	19.6
\$2,000-4,999	18.0	11.1	18.8	14.2	13.8	8.8
\$5,000 or more	8.0	7.6	16.3	14.4	3.9	2.7
<b>Type of housing prior to current arrest</b>						
House	52.2%	53.1%	65.6%	59.5%	49.7%	50.5%
Apartment	30.3	33.6	24.2	30.9	28.9	32.7
Trailer/mobile home	9.0	6.8	3.2	4.9	7.6	8.3
Rooming house/hotel/motel	2.8	2.2	1.6	1.3	4.7	3.2
Street/homeless shelter	1.8	1.7	0.9	0.5	5.0	3.7
Group home or institution	1.0	0.5	1.3	0.3	2.5	0.8
Correctional facility	1.5	1.7	1.5	2.2	0.6	0.6
Other	1.3	0.4	1.8	0.4	1.0	0.2
<b>Homeless in the past year, living on the street or in a shelter?</b>						
Yes	12.4%	10.3%	5.9%	4.1%	22.7%	19.1%

	Percent of veterans in State prison reporting mental illness, 1997
Vietnam-era service	
Yes	19.3%
No	19.1
Served in combat duty	
Yes	21.9%
No	18.6

## Reported levels of employment and income were higher among veteran inmates

Prior to their arrest, veteran inmates were more likely to be employed than nonveterans (table 16). Veterans in both State prisons (78%) and local jails (72%) reported higher levels of employment in the month before their arrest than nonveterans (67% and 63%, respectively). In particular, veterans (69% of State, 59% of local) were more likely to be working full-time prior to their arrest than nonveterans (54% of State, 48% of local). Among Federal prisoners, 72% of both groups had been employed prior to their arrest, but a greater share of veterans (65%) were employed full-time than nonveterans (59%).

The personal income of veterans in the month before their arrest was also higher than that of other inmates. Among State prisoners, 53% of veterans reported an income of at least \$1,000 in the month prior to arrest, compared to 41% of nonveterans. About half of veterans in local jails, compared to nearly a third of nonveterans, reported an income of at least \$1,000. Veterans in both State prison (13%) and local jail (16%) were also less likely to report the lowest incomes (under \$200) than nonveterans (20% and 25%, respectively).

While overall veterans reported higher incomes, the percentage of inmates reporting the highest incomes (at least \$5,000) was nearly equal for veterans (8% of State, 16% of Federal, and 4% of local) and nonveterans (8%, 14%, and 3%, respectively).

#### **Incarcerated veterans were as likely as nonveterans to have been homeless when arrested**

In both State and Federal prisons, as well as local jails, veterans and nonveterans reported living in similar types of housing prior to their arrests. Among State prisoners, about half of both veterans (52%) and nonveterans (53%) reported living in a house, and about a third of both (30% of veterans, 34% of nonveterans) said they had lived in an apartment. Similar percentages of veterans and other State prisoners reported living in each type of housing prior to their arrest, including other correctional facilities (2% of each) and group homes or institutions (1% of each).

Veterans were no more likely to be homeless at the time of their arrest than other inmates. Among both State (2% of each) and Federal (1% of each) prisoners, equal percentages of veterans and nonveterans reported living on the street or in a homeless shelter prior to their arrest. The percentage of veterans in prison (12% of State and 6% of Federal) reporting homelessness in the year prior to arrest was also similar to that of nonveterans (10% of State and 4% of Federal).

#### **Veterans who had not been honorably discharged had more serious criminal and substance abuse histories**

In their current offenses, honorably and not honorably discharged veterans in State prison showed few differences. For example, nearly equal percentages of honorably (55%) and not honorably (56%) discharged veterans were serving a sentence for a violent offense. In addition, 35% of both honorable and not honorable discharges were on some type of criminal justice status at the time of their current arrest.

Among State prisoners, veterans not honorably discharged reported more serious criminal histories than honorably discharged veterans. Violent recidivists accounted for 52% of veterans not honorably discharged, compared to 42% of honorable discharges. A higher percentage of veterans not honorably discharged (43%) also reported at least three prior sentences, compared to those with honorable discharges (36%).

Incarcerated veterans not honorably discharged also reported higher levels of prior substance abuse. A majority of these veterans (57%) reported drug use in the month before their offense, compared to 43% of honorable discharges. About a third (32%) of veterans not honorably discharged, but nearly a quarter (23%) of honorable discharges, reported prior intravenous drug use. Veterans not honorably discharged also reported a higher incidence of alcohol dependence (36%) than honorable discharges (30%).

While honorably discharged veterans reported lower levels of substance abuse, they did report a slightly higher incidence of mental illness (19%) than veterans not honorably discharged (16%).

	Percent of veterans in State prison, 1997	
	Discharge type	
	Honorable	Not honorable <sup>a</sup>
<b>Current offense</b>		
Violent	54.7%	56.5%
Property	20.3	19.7
Drug	14.9	11.8
Public-order	10.1	11.6
<b>Status at time of current arrest</b>		
None	64.6%	64.7%
Status	35.4	35.3
On parole	20.4	19.0
On probation	14.4	16.3
Other	0.6	0.0
<b>Criminal history</b>		
None	31.8%	25.4%
Priors	68.2	74.6
Violent recidivists <sup>b</sup>	42.3	52.1
Drug recidivists only	2.0	2.8
Other recidivists <sup>c</sup>	24.0	19.7
<b>Number of prior probation or incarceration sentences</b>		
0	31.8%	25.4%
1	17.2	18.3
2	15.1	13.8
3-5	21.4	25.0
6-10	9.2	12.4
11 or more	5.3	5.1
<b>Prior drug use</b>		
Ever used drugs	77.1%	86.4%
Used IV drugs	22.5	31.6
Used drugs in month before offense	42.9	57.5
<b>Prior alcohol abuse</b>		
History of alcohol dependence	30.1%	35.9%
Ever drove drunk	59.3	60.7
Ever engaged in binge drinking <sup>d</sup>	43.8	48.9
<b>Identified as mentally ill<sup>e</sup></b>		
	18.8%	15.8%
Number of prisoners	98,457	22,338

<sup>a</sup>Excludes medical discharges and those veterans who have not yet been discharged.

<sup>b</sup>Recidivists with at least one current or past violent offense.

<sup>c</sup>Includes recidivists with unknown offenses.

<sup>d</sup>Binge drinking is defined as having consumed as much as a fifth of liquor in a single day.

<sup>e</sup>Reported either a mental or emotional condition or an overnight stay in a mental hospital or program.

## Methodology

Data in this report are based on personal interviews conducted through the 1997 Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities and the 1996 Survey of Inmates in Local Jails. Detailed descriptions of the methodology and sample design of each survey can be found in the following: *Substance Abuse and Treatment, State and Federal Prisoners, 1997* (NCJ 172871); and *Profile of Jail Inmates, 1996* (NCJ 164629).

### Accuracy of the estimates

The accuracy of the estimates in this report depends on two types of error: sampling and nonsampling. Sampling error is the variation that may occur by chance because a sample rather a

complete enumeration of the population was conducted. Nonsampling error can be attributed to many sources, such as nonresponses, differences in the interpretation of questions among inmates, recall difficulties, and processing errors. The sampling error, as measured by an estimated standard error, varies by the size of the estimate and the size of the base population. Estimates of the standard errors for selected characteristics have been calculated for each survey (see appendix tables). These standard errors may be used to construct confidence intervals around percentages. For example, the 95% confidence interval around the percentage of veterans in State prison who were identified as mentally ill is approximately 19.3% plus or minus 1.96 times 1.22% (or 21.7% to 16.9%).

These standard errors may also be used to test the statistical significance of the difference between two sample statistics by pooling the standard errors of the two sample estimates. For example, the standard error of the difference between veterans and other State prisoners who used intravenous (IV) drugs would be 1.40% (or the square root of the sum of the squared standard errors for each group). The 95% confidence interval around the difference would be 1.96 times 1.40 (or 2.74%). Since the difference of 5.1% (24.5% minus 19.4%) is greater than 2.74%, the difference would be considered statistically significant.

### Estimates of the veteran population

This report includes incarceration rates for veterans and nonveterans in the U.S. population. These rates were calculated using unpublished projections of the veteran population that were generated by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs' National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics. These veteran population projections are based on 1980 and 1990 decennial census data on prior military service and discharge data from the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD).

### Historical statistics on active duty military personnel

The DoD annually reports the number of active duty military personnel in each branch of service, as well as the DoD total. For this report these historical data were used to calculate the percentage of active duty military personnel attributed to each branch of service at the end of the fiscal year, 1950 to 1998. These DoD data are available for the years 1950 to 1995 in Table 580, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1998*, p. 364. Data for later years were obtained from the following DoD website: <http://web1.whs.osd.mil/mmjd/military/history/milhist.htm>

**Appendix table 1. Standard errors of selected characteristics of veterans and nonveterans in State and Federal prisons, and local jails**

Selected characteristic	Estimated standard errors					
	State prison		Federal prison		Local jail	
	Veterans	Non-veterans	Veterans	Non-veterans	Veterans	Non-veterans
<b>Current offense</b>						
Violent	1.54%	0.58%	1.66%	0.56%	2.14%	0.82%
Property	1.25	0.48	1.23	0.39	1.92	0.76
Drug	1.09	0.48	3.11	1.22	1.68	0.70
Public-order	0.94	0.35	1.41	0.58	2.17	0.78
<b>Criminal justice status at arrest</b>						
Any status	1.48%	0.58%	2.45%	1.01%	2.21%	0.85%
<b>Criminal history</b>						
Any priors	1.41%	0.49%	2.70%	1.11%	2.21%	0.86%
<b>Prior drug use</b>						
Ever used drugs	1.25%	0.43%	2.46%	1.01%	1.83%	0.63%
Ever used IV drugs	1.32	0.46	2.07	0.73	1.88	0.63
Used drugs in month before offense	1.53	0.58	2.70	1.13	2.48	0.94
Under influence at time of offense	1.36	0.55	2.26	0.96	2.21	0.88
<b>Prior alcohol abuse</b>						
Alcohol dependent	1.42%	0.50%	2.24%	0.82%	2.03%	0.75%
Ever drove drunk	1.52	0.58	2.73	1.12	2.28	0.94
Binge drinker <sup>a</sup>	1.53	0.57	2.60	1.04	2.25	0.90
<b>Identified as mentally ill<sup>b</sup></b>	1.22%	0.43%	1.86%	0.56%	2.35%	0.56%
<b>Homeless</b>						
In year before arrest	1.01%	0.35%	1.29%	0.45%	1.80%	0.65%
At time of arrest	0.41	0.15	0.52	0.16	0.92	0.30

<sup>a</sup>Binge drinking is defined as having consumed in a day as much as a fifth of liquor, equivalent to 20 drinks, 3 bottles of wine, or 3 six-packs of beer.

<sup>b</sup>Reported either a mental or emotional condition or an overnight stay in a mental hospital or program.

## Military prison statistics

In 1994 the DoD Corrections Council established an annual military confinement report. The council, comprised of representatives from each branch of military service, adopted a standardized questionnaire with a common set of definitions. With the Corrections Council, the Bureau of Justice Statistics produced a series of tables that provide a unified profile of persons in the custody of U.S. military authorities. (For more information, see *Correctional Populations in the United States, 1995*, NCJ 163916 and *Correctional Populations in the United States, 1996*, NCJ 170013.)

## CAGE diagnostic instrument for alcohol dependence

The CAGE questionnaire is a diagnostic instrument for detecting a person's history of alcohol abuse or dependence. In a clinical test involving hospital admissions, three or more positive responses to the four CAGE questions carried a .99 predictive value for alcohol abuse or dependence. For data on the relationship of CAGE to other alcohol abuse indicators, see *Substance Abuse and Treatment, State and Federal Prisoners, 1997*, (NCJ 172871). For further information on the predictive values of the CAGE instrument, see the article "Screening for Alcohol Abuse Using the CAGE Questionnaire" by B. Bush and others, *The American Journal of Medicine*, Vol. 82, February 1987, pp.231-35.

**Appendix table 2. Standard errors of victim characteristics by veteran status of violent State prisoners, 1997**

Victim characteristic	Percent of violent State prisoners	
	Veterans	Nonveterans
<b>Gender of victim(s)</b>		
Male	2.01%	0.87%
Female	2.08	0.84
Both males and females	1.25	0.55
<b>Age of youngest victim</b>		
12 or younger	1.71%	0.52%
13-17	1.53	0.55
18-24	1.45	0.74
25-34	1.75	0.83
35-54	1.76	0.76
55 or older	1.03	0.37
<b>Victim-offender relationship</b>		
Knew victim <sup>a</sup>	1.94%	0.88%
Relative	1.75	0.51
Intimate <sup>b</sup>	1.34	0.50
Friend/acquaintance	1.96	0.78
Other <sup>c</sup>	0.93	0.45
Knew none of victims	1.94	0.88
<b>Use of weapon</b>		
Yes	2.03%	0.88%
No	2.03	0.88

<sup>a</sup>More than one victim may have been reported.

<sup>b</sup>Includes (ex-)spouse, (ex-)boyfriend and (ex-)girlfriend.

<sup>c</sup>Includes those known by sight only.

**Appendix table 3. Standard errors of selected characteristics of veterans in State and Federal prisons, and local jails**

Selected characteristic	Percent of veterans		
	State prison	Federal prison	Local jail
<b>Discharge type</b>			
Honorable	1.32%	2.17%	1.77%
Dishonorable*	1.17	1.96	1.58
<b>Branch of military service</b>			
Army	1.51%	2.70%	2.25%
Navy	1.16	1.90	1.78
Marine Corps	1.11	2.02	1.56
Air Force	0.87	1.78	1.34
<b>Combat duty during service</b>	1.23%	2.21%	1.76%
<b>Era of military service</b>			
Vietnam era (1964-73)	1.49%	2.76%	...
Other than Vietnam era	1.49	2.76	...

...Data not reported.

\*Excludes medical discharges and those veterans who have not yet been discharged.

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The Bureau of Justice Statistics is the statistical agency of the U.S. Department of Justice. Jan M. Chaiken, Ph.D., is director.

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Christopher J. Mumola wrote this report under the supervision of Allen J. Beck. Thomas P. Bonczar, Laura M. Maruschak and Todd D. Minton provided statistical assistance. Tom Hester edited the report. Jayne Robinson prepared the report for publication.

January 2000, NCJ 178888

This report and others from the Bureau of Justice Statistics are available through the Internet —

**<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/>**

The data from the 1997 Surveys of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities and the 1996 Survey of Inmates in Local Jails are available from the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data, maintained by the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan, 1-800-999-0960. The archive may also be accessed through the BJS Internet site.